

Theatre Architecture in Ancient India

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Mr. G. Venkatachalam says in his article on "Theatre Architecture" (Vol. I., No.2. of the *Theatre*, page, 109): "Books are silent as to the nature of theatre crafts in Ancient India. The assumption is that Dramas and Musical Plays were enacted on temporarily constructed stages amidst quiet cool groves or by the side of village shrines. Though the names *rangabhumi* or *natakasala* connote some sort of architectural structures, there is so far no evidence to show the type and the details of constructive features. It is possible that like in Ancient Greece theatres in India were mere open-air theatres with no permanent stage fittings or specially constructed buildings. Village dramas of today may give us some idea of the stage craft in olden days." Then on page 112, he again says: "As noticed in the beginning of this article we are not certain today of the nature of Indian stages in olden days, except the bare information that like Greek theatres, they were open-air theatres amidst sylvan surroundings or near village shrines."

These remarks are painful to one who has some acquaintance with the Sanskrit texts on Dramaturgy. The author above referred to evidently knows no sources of knowledge on "Theatre Architecture" in Ancient India other than the *therukkuttus*—street-dramas of the villages where benches serve as the platform and wooden mortars (*ural*) serve as chairs, and the *kuttambalam* of the temples, as for instance in Malabar. Books are not silent as to the nature of the theatre crafts in Ancient India. There is ample evidence to show that the names *rangabhumi* and *natakasala* connote not 'some sort of architectural structures,' but well-planned, well-built, decorated, beautiful theatres. The types and the details of constructive features of the Indian theatres in olden times may be known by a reference to the Sanskrit sources. This article proposes to examine the available Sanskrit texts on Theatre Architecture.

Dance and Music were highly-evolved Court arts in Ancient India. They were not the folk-art to be shown on the streets or near the village shrines. The palaces contained separate halls for *Natya*. The *Malavika Agnimitra* of Kalidasa furnishes us the information that the palace of the King had a *chitrasala* (painting hall) and a *prekshagara* (a hall for witnessing *Natya*). It is in this *prekshagara* that Malavika's dance is presented. There can be no mistaking this place to be a mere hall or 'some sort of architectural structure.' It is a perfect *natyasala*, there being mention of the green-room and the curtain. In act V of the *Sakuntala* it is said that Hamsapadika, the King's quondam sweetheart is singing in the *sangitasala*. Saradatanaya in his work on Dramaturgy, *Bhavaprakasa*, describes three types of theatres in the palace of the king, each for the presenting of a different kind of dance. At the beginning of his work he says that he wrote the book on seeing thirty different kinds of dramas presented by a proprietor named Divakara from whom he learnt the *natyaveda*. This Saradatanaya is assigned to A. D. 1175-1250. Narada's *Sangita-makaranda*, a very old work on Music, describes one type of theatre, giving its measurements, etc. The

Vishnudharmottara describes two types of theatres. Lastly we have Bharata's *Natyasastra*, the earliest work on Drama, devoting one whole chapter to Theatre Architecture Chapter 2. of the *Natyasastra*, gives three types of theatres, each again divided into three kinds according to their size and gives also measurement, etc., for each of these.

The verses in Chapter II, of the *Natyasastra* are confusing in some places. The great commentary on the *Natyasastra* by Acharya Abhinavagupta helps us a good deal in understanding Bharata. Dr. Keith's *Sanskrit Drama*, towards the end, contains a small section on stage architecture according to Bharata, but the account there is very meagre and sometimes mistaken also. Miss Goaavari V. Ketkar has produced a study of the *Natyasastra*, the use of which book, however, is little to those who do not know Marathi in which it is written. Still those who want to have an idea of the types of theatres in Ancient India may derive much benefit by referring to the very useful diagrams of Bharata's theatres given by Miss Ketkar in her book.

The sages request Bharata to speak of the theatre, it being the first requisite in *Natya*. Bharata says that the learned Visvakarman devised three types of theatres according to the *Sastras*, viz., *vikrashta*, i.e., rectangular, *chaturasra*, i.e., square, and *tryasra*, i.e., triangular. Dr. Keith does not say what the *vikrashta* means and wrongly translates *chaturasra* as 'rectangular.' Each of these three again falls into three kinds according to size: *jyeshtha*, i.e., biggest, *madhyama*, i.e., middle-sized; and *kaniya*, i.e., small. Dr. Keith misses this second classification. Of these three, i.e., biggest, middle-sized, and small, Bharata for the sake of good acoustic effect asks us to choose the middle-sized. A reading of the verses here would give the idea that the biggest is for the *Devas*, the middle-sized for kings, and the small for the people. Bharata asks us not to vie with the *Devas* and their very big theatres, because we mortals must build with great trouble while they do things by mere wish. So Bharata recommends the middle-sized theatre to us. Abhinava's commentary here gives original interpretation. We are unable to decide whether that is Bharata's idea, but Abhinava gives us additional information, namely, that if Bharata assigns the biggest theatre to the *Devas*, it means that we should resort to the biggest to enact such kinds of dramas as the *Dima* in which occur fights between the *Devas* and the *asuras* and consequently much space is wanted. If we have to enact the romances of a king's private life, the middle-sized theatre is enough for our purpose. We must go to the small theatre when we intend staging such plays as the monologue, *Bhana* plays in which ordinary men and women are characters.

The biggest measures 108 *hastas* or 54 yards; the middle-sized 64 h or 32 yds., and the small 32 h or 16 yds. These may be of the shape of a rectangle or square or triangle. Bharata then picks out the middle-sized which he has already praised as the best from all points of view and gives its dimensions, dividing it into three according to shape, namely, rectangular, square, and triangular. The rectangular should be 64 h. long, 32 wide. This space should be divided into two, giving two squares, 32 X 32. The front square should be made into the audience-hall. The other square should again be divided into two halves of 16 X 32 each. Of these two portions, the front half 16 X

32 should be made into two halves measuring 8 X 32 each. An *eight-hastas* square at the centre of the back half of these two portions should be made into the *rangasirsha*. The front half 8 X 32 should have at the centre the *rangapitha*, i.e., the stage proper, measuring 8 X 16 leaving at both the sides two verandahs of 8 h. square. The portion measuring 16 X 32 remaining at the back of the *rangasirsha* should be made into the *nepathyagriha*, the green-room with two doorways. The bewildering nature of this part of the *natyasastra* is plain when we see Abhinava giving numerous and differing views all over the chapter. Here especially he gives three other opinions of other scholars describing the measurements of the green-room, the *rangasirsha* and the *rangapitha* in three different ways. Abhinava himself bewilders us by giving a measurement of 64 X 64 h, which will mean a square theatre, though Bharata is speaking here of a rectangular theatre, 64 X 32 h. There should be two doorways to the green-room. The *rangasirsha* is to be a little higher, and here it is that the actors make offerings and *puja* before the drama begins and wait during the drama when they have dressed themselves up. Abhinava says that if the stage is imagined as a man lying on his back, this space called 'the head of the stage' will look like his head.

The *chaturasra* measures 32 h, on both sides. In this type the *rangapitha* is smaller naturally. The entrance to the green-room should be only one. In other respects, the construction of this type should follow the instructions given as regards the rectangular. Just as in the rectangular type, the stage proper is also rectangular, in the square type the stage proper is square.

Then Bharata describes a *trysra*-triangular theatre. The speciality to be noted in its construction is that the *rangapitha* here is triangular and has an entrance into the green-room at its back angle.

As regards the entrance gates to the audience-hall, Abhinava says that they may be three, perhaps one on each side. In the rectangular 'the head of the stage' is a little higher than the 'stage proper' while, in the square, both are on the same level.

As regards the size and measurement and types of theatres in general, Abhinava says that altogether eighteen kinds of theatres are possible as spoken of in the *Sastras*. Bharata himself says at the end of this chapter that there are many types of theatres and that other types must be constructed by learned men applying the instructions given above.

In a further chapter, Bharata says that we should resort to a rectangular stage to present dances involving much to-and-fro movements-*gata-agata prachara*, which are impossible on a stage of smaller width. He also says that in the square and the triangular stages the *chaturasra gati* only is possible.

There is also elaborate treatment of the number of pillars in the various portions of the theatre in each type, how and where they should be raised and what auspicious ceremonies should attend this *stambhasthapana*. Bharata dedicates four main pillars to the four castes even as portions of the whole theatre to the various gods for the sake of protection. There is absolutely no warrant for

Dr. Keith to read here the idea that the dedication of the four main pillars also apportions those four places in the audience-hall for the four castes in the audience. Bharata speaks first that a good plot of ground should be chosen and cleared of all grass, shrubs, bones, skulls, etc. Music, *puja* and feast should attend the measurement-ceremony. The erection of the walls is then described. The whole hall must be richly decorated with wood-work, representing creepers, birds, animals, etc. The walls must be decorated with beautiful paintings of pictures of pleasure, of men and women and of creepers and trees, after the walls have been made smooth and white with *chunam*.

As regards the seating arrangements also, Bharata's theatre was perfect. He says that the seating arrangements should be in the form of a *gallery-sopanakriti*. The seats should be either of brick or of wood. They should be one and a half feet high above the ground, to give a good view of the *rangapitha*. The surface of the *rangapitha* should not be like the *kurmapristha* (high at the centre and sloping on all-sides like the back of a tortoise), or the *matsyapristha* (high along the centre and sloping on both sides like the back of a fish). It should be smooth like the surface of a mirror. Bharata says, that the house shall be *dvibhumi*. This term is interpreted variously. We may be tempted to take that the house had two storeys and that thus box-seats were also provided for in the ancient theatre. But Abhinava, after giving the opinions of other scholars, quotes his own teacher's view and says that what Bharata means by that word is that the seats should be in gallery form, rising from the pit to the height of the *rangapitha*. But the real import of that term seems to be that the house contains two *bhumis*, the raised platform for the stage and the pit for the audience. Bharata paid due attention to the acoustic properties of the theatre also. He says that 64 X 32 h. is the maximum size for a theatre and that one should not exceed that measurement. He praises the middle-sized alone among the three kinds of houses. The reason he gives is, this: "Constructors should not build a theatre of a greater size, for the *Natya* would become indistinct. If the hall should be very big, the actor's voice would either become indistinct or bad on account of the necessity for the actors to shout out. The colour of the face or the tune of the varying *rasa* and *bhava* would become indistinct owing to the largeness of the house. Therefore, of all halls, the middle-sized is the best, for here the instruments and songs would be heard beautifully well." Again he says that the stage should be like a cave in a mountain without very large windows, so that there might be a clear and audible sound effect. Even the windows should be fitted with apertured doors so that there might not be too much air. In this connection we may observe that Dr. Keith's connecting this dictum of Bharata that the hall should look like a cave with the Ramghat Hill Cave once used for recitation, etc., is pointless.

As regards permanent fittings, if we go through the further chapters of the *Natyasastra*, we see that in this respect also the Ancient Indian theatre was remarkably equipped: The 23rd Chapter deals elaborately with dress, masks, ornamented decorations, painting and shading of faces, beards, etc. The introduction of birds and animals according to the situation technically called *Sanjiva* is described. Clothes, arms, and all sorts of accessories made of stiffened cloth, wood,

metal, mud and wax are then described. Chapter 35 towards the end deals with the workmen, craftsmen, artisans and artists attached permanently to a theatre or a dramatic troupe. The garlander, goldsmith, painter, carpenter, washerman and others are here mentioned.

The *Vishnudharmottara* mentions only two types of theatres. It says "The *Natya* should be presented only in a theatre, and a theatre might be of two kinds, rectangular or square. The square should be 16 X 16 yds. The theatre should not be too small or too big, for there would be congestion in a small one and the show would become indistinct in a big one." The measurement given here for a rectangular theatre is not clear, the text being corrupt. This work does not mention the triangular theatre.

Narada's *Sangitamakaranda* mentions only the square theatre. It gives a new measurement, that this square theatre should be 48 X 48 yds. Thus according to Bharata this will perhaps be a *jyestha* type. Narada then adds that the *natyasala* must be richly painted with the eighty-four *bandhas* mentioned in the *Kamasastra*, or more likely the dance *bandhas* of the *Natyasastra*, inlaid with innumerable gems of diverse colours and decorated with chowries, flags and festoons. He gives the house four gates. In the centre there should be a raised platform, beautiful and perfumed, a twelve-yard square, in the middle of which the king's seat should be arranged.

Chapter X of Saradatanaya's *Bhavaprakasa* says that the palace of a king should have three kinds of theatres. This writer omits the rectangular type and has in its place the *vritta*, circular theatre. He opines that the king should have all the three types in his palace, each for a particular kind of dance and audience. He assigns to the circular theatre only the *chitra* variety of the *misra* dance i.e., the style in which both *marga* and *desi* are mixed. The audience in this theatre should be only males, consisting, besides the king, of proprietors of other theatres –*para-mantapikas*, and the chief citizens. In the square type the audience consist of the king courtézans, ministers, merchants, commander of the army, friends and the king's sons. Here all sorts of *misra* dance and music could be conducted. In the triangular, the audience with the king include the sacrificial priests, the preceptors, the king's harem and the chief queen. The dance conducted in this theatre should be of the *marga* style only.

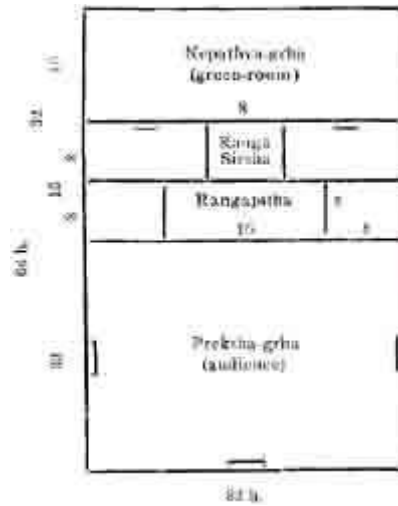
The *Sivatattvaratnakara* of Basavaraja says that King Venkatappa built a theatre at Ikkeri. It describes the grandeur of that theatre, worked in ivory and sandal and inlaid with precious stones, having, a garden around it, receiving enough light where it was wanted and with special artificial lighting arrangements in the darker portions. The whole house was beautified with paintings of various themes on the walls that looked like mirror.

The *Sangitachudamani*, an unpublished work on Music, seems to have dealt with the theatre. We have two verses from it describing *yavanika* (curtain) quoted in another available work on Poetics. The verses say that there should be a thick and beautiful curtain in front. Behind it, there should be two very thin and beautiful curtains looking just like thin mist. The first curtain is the front 'drop'

which is removed as soon as the show begins. Behind the mist-like curtain, the *danseuse* performs the dance caned *lasya*.

Thus an examination of the Sanskrit works on Drama, Dance and Music, gives us the certain idea that the words *natyasala* and *rangabhumi*, far from being merely imaginary or representing anything crude, represented beautiful theatres of various types, scientifically planned and richly decorated. It is wrong to assume that the *rasikas* and royal savants of old thronged by the highway tree and squatted on the street to witness the Sanskrit dramas of Kalidasa, Sudraka, and Bhavabhuti, or to enjoy the gracefull art of *abhinaya* and *sangita*, the science of which has been perfected in a vast literature.¹

ONE KIND OF *VIKRASHTA*-RECTANGULAR THEATRE



¹ The *Silappadikaram* (Tamil classic) describes a small stage intended for dance, more or less square in shape. Three curtains are mentioned and measurements are also given. We shall deal with it in a further article.

Theatre-Architecture in Ancient

India

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II

In an article on this subject published in the November–December issue, 1931, of this journal, I spoke of the existence of well-built theatres in ancient India on the basis of evidences from Sanskrit treatises on Drama.¹ The kinds of theatres, the details of their dimensions, equipment etc., –these were dealt with by me in that article, as far as can be gathered from available Sanskrit texts on *Natya Sastra*. Now I propose, similarly, to treat of theatre-architecture on the basis of evidences from Sanskrit works on the *Silpa Sastra*, which deal with the construction of the theatre along with that of their buildings.

The *Samarangana Sutradhara* of King Bhoja, a work comprehensively treating of the architecture of palaces and other buildings, of arms, air-vehicles, painting etc., describes the construction of the palace of a King in Chapter XV. While mentioning the various parts of the palace, it says that in the southern quarter of the palace is built the 'Gandharva Vesma,' where 'preksha' and 'sangita,' (drama and dance) are witnessed. Coming to painting and the decoration of the buildings, Bhoja gives in Chapter XXXIV what sort of pictures should adorn what places. He says here that the halls for 'preksha' and 'sangita' should be decorated with pictures of damsels with the dance-expression called 'mudita' –'gladdened face,' of danseuses in their skillful dances, and of women playing on the various instruments.

The *Isana Siva Guru Deva Paddhati* Isana Guru Deva, a big work on 'sivagama,' temple-architecture, 'murti lakshana', etc., gives a small and obscure description of the 'prekshagriha' –the place for dramatic presentation.

The *Silpa Ratna* of Sri Kumara describes in Chapter XXXIX, the various 'mantapas' within a temple, of which the 'Natya Mantapa' is one. This work devotes one section of eight verses to the construction of the 'Natya Mantapa' in the temple. The text as printed in the *Trivandrum Sanskrit Series* is corrupt, and as that of other 'silpa' works, lacks grammar. These facts add to the difficulty of releasing the information locked in the technical terms of these 'silpa' works, research work in which field has not yet advanced sufficiently. The text contains a description of the details of construction, dimensions etc., but only a little is clear. The 'Natya Mantapa' in the temple is divided into four parts. The state proper, 'Ranga,' is square, has four pillars, and is "perfect with other requisites." In the back is the place for 'mridanga' and other instrumental accompaniment making the orchestra, 'Kutapa,' supporting the 'natya.' This place accommodating the instruments is the 'Ranga Sirsha' of Bharata. Sri Kumara says that behind this place for orchestra, "the

'Nepathya drama,' the green room, must be constructed by one knowing the several parts of the stage." This 'Natya Mantapa' must be in the south of the temple, facing directly the God in the main sanctuary. In the end, Sri Kumara says that in a temple or in the cities for the sake of the people, or in the capital where the king lives, theatres like the above-described must be built according to 'lakshanas.' Thus though Sri Kumara mainly describes only the theatre in the temple, he mentions also the theatres of the people and of the King.

The *Narada Silpa* of Sage Narada, an unpublished 'silpa' treatise!² a manuscript copy of which is available in the Adyar Library, describes the theatres, 'Nataka Salas.' The work affects a very archaic style and consequently the interpretation becomes very difficult. To begin with, Narada divides 'Nataka Salas' into three kinds: 'Daiva,' 'Gandharva,' and 'Kshatra,' *i. e.*, the theatre of God, of the people, and of the king. The first, 'Daiva' is to be built in a temple; 'Gandharva,' the second, where all people see dramas, is to be built in such places as cities; the last, 'Kshatra' is to be built in a king's palace. And here, there is this good rule: On a 'daiva' stage should be presented 'Daivika Rasa,' *i. e.*, 'Bhakti,' divine and religious themes; on a 'Kshatra' or king's stage, the 'Kshatra Rasa,' *i. e.*, 'vira,' the heroic *etc.*; the cultured and the tasteful present in the 'Gandharva' or the city-theatre for all people, all the various 'Rasas.'

Narada is the only writer who has given this clear division of the theatres in ancient India. From Bharata's description of the theatre, we get only the King's and the people's theatres. But in a later context, Bharata says that dance and dramatic performances should be a feature of festivals. The art of 'Natya' had for its patron, more than the king, the God in the temple of the city, town, or village. Each place had not a king but each small place also had its temple. There is a Tamil maxim which says that one should not live in a place where there is no temple. The centre of village life was the temple, which gathered its revenue and redistributed it during its annual festivals. Each place had its artists and craftsmen, to all of whom employment was given by the temple. The annual festival of the temple was a festival to the whole village and to many other neighbouring villages also. The annual festival itself was an exhibition of the artware, metal works etc. of the neighbouring places. The occasion of such annual festival was marked also by dramatic performances. We all know very well how the prologues to most of the Sanskrit dramas say that those dramas were staged during the festivals of certain deities of certain holy places. The puppet show, 'Bommalattam', was up to a recent time, to be seen during the festivals. The 'Bhagavatars,' *i. e.*, the Brahmin Bharatas staged their 'Natakams' during the festivals, as for instance, the 'Prahlada- Charitam' during 'Narasimha Jayanti'³ Now that this 'Natakam' and the race of the Brahmin Bharatas are almost dead, some rich temples arrange during festivals for 'Katha Kalakshepams' by the new 'Bhagavatars', the successors of the old 'Bharata Bhagavatars'.

Similarly, the lower class of people, during festivals of their deities, such as the 'Droupadi Amman Utsavam,' arrange for their dramas, the 'Terukkuttus.'

Besides the various kinds of 'Natya' during these annual festivals, each temple had its 'Natya Mantapa' and its daily 'Natya' by courtezans attached to the temple. This is supremely so in the cases of the temples of Siva., who is the greatest dancer, the greatest in the pantheon of 'Natyacharyas' and who himself dances every day in the glorious evening hour. The Vaishnavite lyrics are all set to music and were intended for 'Natya.' The 'Arayars' at Srirangam, Kanchi, and Alvar Tirunagiri were master exponents of these, which they offered to their Lord. 'Natya' in the temple is very old. Kalidasa mentions in his *Megha Sandesa* the daily dance in the evening by courtezans in the temple of Mahakala in Ujjain. Kalhana speaks of such daily dance by courtezans in temples in some other part of India in his *Rajatarangini*. Even now the evidences of those times are lingering in our temples in some useless specimens of these 'servants of the Lord.' Without making possible those conditions which will again make them the repositories and exponents of the beautiful art of 'Natya,' other social reform issues have set themselves to sweep out the race. Reformation often times is so lacking in imagination; it produces cultural anemia. The temple was thus the greatest patron of 'Natya' next to the palace. It is said that a very great personality of to-day hailing from the North characteristically delivered himself of a truth that nothing would flourish under the shadow of the South Indian temple towers. It is in the shade of the lofty towers that everything flourished, the towers which by their height, not only appear to, but really also dominate the whole village life. Withdrawal from their nestling shade has been the cause of life steadily becoming more and more insipid.

So each temple had its 'Natya Mantapa.' The 'Kuttambalam' is a feature of all temples. It is this that Sri Kumara describes in his *Silpa Ratna* and the *Isana Paddhati* briefly speaks of. The *Narada Silpa* just mentions the 'Daiva,' this temple stage, and says that it shall be of the form of a 'Mantapa' and passes over it. Naturally the 'Natya Mantapa' in the temple was not, and could not have been, so perfect and elaborately built as the theatres of the King or of the people.

The 'Kshatra' or the King's theatre also is not fully described by Narada. He says that it is constructed in the palace in the form of halls with 'Anganas' or courts. We can supply the description of 'Daiva' from Sri Kumara. So also we can supply the description of the 'Kshatra' from the works surveyed by me in the last article. The *Natya Sastra* of Bharata, the *Bhavaprakasa* of Saradatanaya etc., describe the 'Kshatra' theatre of the palace. All throughout the Sanskrit 'Kavya' and Drama literature we can see this theatre in the King's palace. The *Ramayana* says that one of the losses to the country resulting from its being without a king is that 'Utsavas' and 'Samajas,' festivities and gatherings of art-lovers in which feature joyous 'Natas' and 'Nartakas' which are necessary for the nourishment of the country, do not flourish. ⁴ It is part of the 'Rajadharma' that the king should patronise 'Natya,' and that the greatest gift he can make is the arranging of dramatic performances. Bharata says in his 'Natya Sastra' in chapter XXXVI: "Among the 'Dharmas' of a king, great merit is sung of this drama. Of all 'Danas,' gifts, this gift of drama is the greatest." ⁵

Coming to the theatre of the public, the 'Gandharva,' it is this that Narada describes at great length in his 'Silpa' work. The ancient Indian led a rich life. Life was a supreme art for him, and all the fine arts helped the greatest art of his, namely, life. This is true not only of the finer among those whom Vatsyayana calls as 'Nagarakas' but of all cultured people in general. The elite of the city had their own public places to meet and enjoy 'Natya and Sangita.' There were theatres in the city, which Sri Kumara calls as 'Manushya' and Narada as 'Gandharva.' And we shall see presently, besides these regular theatres in the city, there were other places in the city more or less like theatres where on many occasions, citizens gathered to enjoy 'Natya.'

As remarked above, *Narada Silpa* is written in an affected archaic style, as a result of which all the valuable details given in it are rendered obscure. The ground is first made into three parts. The portion at the centre is made into the stage proper. Behind the line marked by the curtain, is the third section, which should be built so as to have many rooms, with space enough to place many things. This portion, therefore, was used for keeping the articles of stage equipment and served also as the green-room. The first section of the ground is made into the audience hall. Nearest to the stage are to be arranged seats for the Brahmins; behind them for the Kshatriyas and so on. The audience hall has storeys with large windows for ventilation and here sit the women spectators. Narada further seems to say that the stage itself has three or five 'Bhauras,' that is, it is not even everywhere but of three or five levels. Near the entrance gate and outside the audience hall are several special chambers, a circular hall and rows of beautiful seats for taking rest. This portion of the house perhaps represented a fourth and further section where spectators spent their time before or after the play or at other times when there was no play. Narada speaks of other details also, such as gates, pillars, beams etc. In the end he comes to the decoration of the theatre and says that in the top along the turret, beautiful forms of Gandharvas must be carved. The top of the second section containing the stage proper has an upper room, big or small, which is richly decorated with carved birds and pictures and which ends like a 'Mantapa' in a long 'Sikhara' Or 'Stupi.'

The *Prasada Lakshana* of Vasudeva Suri is perhaps the biggest work on 'Silpa Sastra.' It has an elaborate commentary by one Yagna Dikshita. The work is unpublished and a manuscript copy of it is available in the Adyar Library. The work describes, giving all structural details, many kinds of mansions, public and private 'samanya' and 'visesha.' The public buildings are those where citizens meet and celebrate festivals such as the 'Vasantotsava.' There are theatrical buildings among these, where during the festivals the citizens enjoy 'Natya' performed by courtezans. The private buildings are the palaces and the houses of rich citizens and these also contain special apartments for witnessing 'Natya.' Of these we shall speak now.

The most important of the public buildings where citizens meet during festive occasions to see 'Natya' is the 'Saradaprasada.' The commentator here points out that the 'Saradaprasada' is of two kinds, one intended for Brahmins to meet for studies, debates and other literary activities,

'Kavya Sastra Goshtis,' and the other for the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas for 'Sangitaka,' *i.e.*, for witnessing dance and drama. The temple of Sarasvati built by King Bhoja where he held his literary court was perhaps the first kind of 'Saradaprasada.' The commentator adds that sometimes marriages are celebrated in the 'Saradaprasada' and that it is to suit such celebrations that the text also gives the 'Saradaprasada' additional apartments at the back for feasting large numbers of people. The main purpose for which the 'Saradaprasada' was intended, was, however, witnessing dance during marriages or other occasions like Spring festivities.

Vasodeva Suri describes it as the eighth kind of mansion in his *Prasada Lakshana*. He says that it shall be of a square or other shape. Each building, the text says, has many varieties on account of size. In a village, 'grama,' the building is small; in a town 'pattana,' the same building should be slightly bigger; in a city, 'nagara,' it is still bigger; it is still bigger in size in the capital 'rajadhani.' According to this general rule, Vasudeva gives two main kinds of 'Saradaprasada,' the smaller one in a village and the bigger one in a city. Thus each village also had its 'Saradaprasada'. The smaller had two gates, four adjoining rooms, and three storeys and the bigger in the city had four gates, eight adjoining rooms and five storeys. The whole house had three courts, the middle containing the stage. It was a big 'Chatvara' and was called the 'Rangika Sala.' Behind it were several rooms for other purposes. In the central hall containing the stage were seats arranged in galleries, having steps to ascend at the corners. The commentator says that according to the size, the number of pillars in this hall having the stage is eight, twelve or sixteen; that the hall shall be very spacious and beautified with many pictures. This central hall containing the stage was high and rose up like a 'Mantapa' with dome and other features like 'Stupa' and 'Kalasa' at the top to give beauty. Further this central hall with the stage was surrounded by four or eight rooms which were connected by a running 'Angana' and above these rooms, there were three or five storeys. These storeys also accommodated spectators, perhaps the women.

The 'Sarasvati Mandira' mentioned in the *Kama Sutra*s by Vatsyayana seems to be different from the above-described 'Sarada prasada' though both are similar in that they are dedicated to Sarasvati and to 'Natya.' The difference is that Vatsyayana's 'Sarasvati Mandira' resembles very much the temple. In it is the Goddess of Learning and Arts, Sarasvati. The day sanctified by her name is the 'Panchami,' the fifth day after the new or full moon. Such days are called the 'Prajnata' days. On every 'Panchami' the cultured men of the city repair in a body to the temple of Sarasvati, for Sarasvati is the greatest deity of the 'Nagarakas' who are devoted to learning and the Arts. This temple of Sarasvati is a feature of all cities. The chief among the citizens or some other authority appoints a certain number of artists called 'Niyuktas,' has them permanently paid in the 'Sarasvati Mandira' of his city, to entertain the 'Nagarakas' with 'Natya' on the day of their meeting, namely, the 'Panchami.' Sometimes a touring party of 'Natya'—artists, the visitors, 'Agantukas' arrive. They belong to some other city and are 'Niyuktas' in the 'Sarasvati Mandira' of that city. When these visitors arrive it is the duty of 'Nagarakas' to receive them, arrange for their performance in the local 'Sarasvati Mandira' and honour them with presents. Thus this 'Sarasvati

Mandira' which we see from the *Kama Sutra* as a feature of all 'Nagaras,' cities, was mainly intended for fortnightly presentation of 'Natya' and hence had as the main part, a stage intended for that purpose.

Coming again to the work called *Prasada Lakshana*: It describes other public and private buildings, built for witnessing 'Natya.' The nineteenth mansion called the 'Malika Prasada' is one such public building. The Brahmins do not frequent this. The Kshatriyas meet here during marriages and festival occasions to see 'Natya' performed by courtezans. The stage is in the central hall. By its side and also in the front of the house are, on the whole, four halls and further, behind the stage-hall, there are other apartments for other purposes.

The twenty-second 'prasada' called the 'Matra Parasada' is also for seeing 'Abhinaya Vidya.' The text says that this mansion has a big hall for the presentation of 'Abhinaya' and that the whole house has two or three storeys with stairs at the corners. It is said that sometimes debates are also carried on in this mansion. The commentary says that this 'Matra Prasada' is mainly for seeing dances by courtezans and is also used for testing students and scholars in debates. The building, the commentator says, should be on an elevation of six 'hastas', nine feet, above the ground, with four high gates on the four sides, or on the whole twelve gates, four to each of the three sides. The central hall containing the stage-platform is built like a 'Mantapa.'

The thirty-fourth public mansion called the 'Visvakarma Bhavana' is another such building. Of it the commentator says that it is a public mansion where Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, and other mixed castes—all men in general—meet during auspicious and beautiful occasions such as Spring to hear religious expositions, or music, or to see the presentation of 'Lasya' and 'Abhinaya' by courtezans, or to witness magic, 'Indrajala' or to hear expositions of puranic 'Kathas.'

The thirty-fifth mansion called 'Maya Bhavana' is a square building and is for all men to meet during Spring and on other festive occasions for enjoying music and dance. Thus the public buildings for theatrical performances are five,—the 'Saradaprasada,' the 'Malikaprasada,' the 'Matra Prasada,' the 'Visvakarma Bhavana,' and the 'Maya Bhavana.'

Coming to the 'Visesha Prasadas,' private mansions, the fifteenth mansion described by Vasudeva Suri called the 'Iravata Prasada' is a big palace. Measurements etc., for this palace are given. This building has in it halls for music, dance and drama. These halls occupy the third court. Many other private 'prasadas' like this, of kings as well as of rich men, are said to contain separate halls for the witnessing of 'Natya.'

Thus in ancient India, there were well-planned and well-built theatres in the cities where people gathered, and in the palace where the king witnessed drama and dance with his retinue. These theatres are most elaborately and completely described by Bharata only among writers on the

subject. The theatres were of varying sizes and shapes. From Saradatanaya's *Bhavaprakasa* we see that the 'Vritta' or circular which is the same as the semi-circular or horse-shoe theatre that is considered as the best, was also available in ancient India. Besides these, there were the theatres of temples, which were naturally not very elaborately designed as the palace theatre or the city theatre of the citizens. In addition to these there were the 'Saradaprasada.' and the 'Sarasvati Mandira' in each city, as also the many other mansions which provided stages and were constructed somewhat like theatres, where on many occasions the citizens enjoyed drama and dance. The cultured ancient Indian had so much of the art of 'Natya' dance, drama, and music in his life, that besides the heavy programmes he had in regular theatres, he enjoyed often smaller programmes of drama and dance on all festive occasions in the public mansions of the city, or, if rich, in his own private mansion. These were the many places where, in ancient India, dramas were staged and the art of 'Abhinaya' presented.

1 Subsequent to my writing that article I have been going through the 'Natya' literature and find that many a work describes the theatre. The *Sangita Damodara*, the *Sangita Chandra* of Abhilasha and the *Sangita Narayana* of King Narayana of Parlakimidi contain descriptions of the theatre.

2 Subsequent to my writing this, this work has begun to be published serially in the monthly journal *Tirumalai Sri Venkatesa*, Tiruppati.

3 These traditional 'Natakams' keep the art of Bharata alive. The village of Uttukkadu, six miles south of Kumbakonam, is the oldest place for this drama. It flourished in Nallur, Sulamangalam, Saliangalam and Tepperumalkoil, all villages near to each other. It goes on still at Sulamangalam and Uttukkadu. During the Vasanta festival in the month of *Vaisakha* ten such dramas are even now staged at Uttukkadu every year. Will enthusiasts of Bharata-art turn their attention to this?

4 Narajake janapade prahrishtha nata nartakah.!

Utsavascha samajascha vardhante rashtra vardhanah.!! *Ramayana* Ay. Kanda 15.

5 Nripadharmeshu sarveshu keertyate asya mahaphalam.!

Prekshaneeya pradanam tu sarvadaneshu poojyate.!!

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Theatre-Architecture in

Ancient India

BY V. RAGHAVAN, B.A., (HONS)

III

THE EVIDENCE OF TAMIL LITERATURE

The sources of information on the subject of theatre-architecture in ancient India in Tamil are of two kinds: Kavya (Poetry), and Sastra (Poetics or Dramaturgy). Of the former class, the *Silappadikaram* of Ilankovadikal, a dramatic composition (Nataka Kavya), is the only Kavya which helps us largely in getting glimpses of the nature of the stage or theatre in times past.

Chapter III of this dramatic poem, *Silappadikaram*, is called *Arangettrukkada*, i.e., the *gatha* describing the first dance performance presented for the approval of the king and the learned men. The place is the famous Kaverippumpattinam, the place of Kovalan, the hero of the poem. Madhavi, a courtesan of that city, gives her maiden dance performance before the king who has invited the chief citizens, *Perunkudihal*, of whom Kovalan is one. The chapter opens with a description of Madhavi and then her troupe, consisting of a very learned natyacharya or *Nattuvan* (*Adal Asiriyar*), a sangitacharya or musician (*Isai Asiriyar*), the player on the drum, the mardangika (*Tannumai Asiriyar*), and an accompanying orchestra of a flutist and a vainika, (*Kuzhalon* and *Yaz Asiriyar*). The accompaniment at that time thus consisted of a vocal musician, a drum-player, a flutist, and a vainika. This corresponds to what Bharata has given, there being in his *Natya*, besides the vocal songster, three orchestras, the *Avanaddha Kutapa* (drums), the *Sushirakutapa* (flutes) and the *Tata Kutapa* (stringed instruments). It is only recently that conditions have changed. We can even now see some *Tevaram Goshthi*, singers of Tevarams, having the flute accompaniment. The *Mukha Veena* was accompaniment for sometime in the *Sadir* performances, but soon the clarinet displaced it. The accompaniment of the stringed orchestra of the *Veenas*, the *Tata Kutapa*, disappeared long ago. Now a clarinet, a *Mridanga*, and a vocal songster support the *Natya* today.

After describing the qualities of these accompaniments, the poem describes the stage on which Madhavi gave her performance. The text, now and then, says that the stage was built according to the Sastra, the text on *Natya*. What are the works on *Natya* on which Ilankovadikal based his description of the stage? Adiyarkunallar, in the beginning of his commentary on the poem, gives a list of nine works on dance, drama, and music as authorities for the text of the *Silappadikaram*. None of these works are available now. Ilankovadikal, in his description of the stage, is very meagre, but still this little section of nineteen lines (95-113) is very valuable as being the only means of our having some clear view of the stage in ancient India.

Firstly the measuring pole is described. There is some difficulty in the interpretation of the text on the length of this pole. A good bamboo must be chosen and 24 *Virals*, i.e. *Angulas* must be taken as a unit for further measurement. An *Angula* is given as the measurement of the thumb of a *Mahapurusha*. Directly from *Angula* the text passes to a *Kol*, i.e. *Danda* and by itself the text here would mean that a *Kol* or *Danda* is 24 *Angulas*. In that case, the stage becomes very small. The text, however, contains nothing more. The commentary adds nothing more except giving a name *Muzham* i.e., *Hasta* for 24 *Angulas*. Neither the second commentary nor any of the treatises on *Natya Sastra* quoted by it add anything more. The scale of measurement given in Tamil from the small speck of dust called *Ter Tuhai*, (Skr. *Rajas*) up to *Viral* or *Angula* corresponds to what Bharata has given in the same context in his *Natya Sastra*. But Bharata gives it thus: 24 *Angulas* (Tamil, *Viral*)=1 *Hasta* (Tamil, *Muzham*), and 4 *Hastas*=1 *Danda* (Tamil, *Kol*). In adopting this scale of Bharata, the dimensions of the stage in *Silappadikaram* become sufficiently enhanced. This problem was finally solved for me by Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminatha Aiyar. He said that the text of *Silappadikaram* gave the measurement of a *Hasta* or *Muzham* only, and that the *Kol* or *Danda*, which was very well known as 6 ft., i.e., 4 *Hastas*, was not described in the text. This interpretation solves the difficulty. Thus the scale of measurement given by *Silappadikaram* and all other Tamil works on *Natya* corresponds to that given by Bharata in Chapter II of his *Natya Sastra*: 24 *Angulas*=1 *Hasta*; 4 *Hastas*=1 *Danda*; *Hasta*=1.5 ft; *Danda*=6 ft.

Then the *Silappadikaram* gives the dimensions of the stage. The length is 8 *Kols*; the breadth, 7 *Kols*; the height of the stage-platform is 1 *Kol*; and the height of the stage-space from the floor of the stage up to the beam is 4 *Kols*. That is, the stage is 48 ft. X 42 ft.; the height of the platform is 6 ft., and that of the stage-space, 24 ft. This stage then approaches the nature of the rectangular stage of Bharata, of the middle size, approximately.

The stage is given two doors. The commentator adds that one door is for entrance and one for exit. After the erection of the stage, it is said that the figures of the *Bhutas* for worship must be drawn on the floor of the stage. The commentary says that the *Bhutas* are the figures representing the four castes and that they are drawn on the floor and propitiated. The second commentary adds that further information of the painting of these four *VarnaBhutas*, of their anatomy, dress, decoration, etc., can be had in a further context in the section of the poem called *Azhar Padu Kadai*.

The lights are then spoken of. It is said that they must be so arranged as not to make the pillars cast shadows on the king and his party or the other spectators in the audience hall. The lights are said to be big and beautiful. The curtains are then described. The text mentions three curtains; *Oru Muha Ezhini*, *Poru Muha Ezhini*, and *Karanduvaral Ezhini*. The first-mentioned curtain is one which is pulled along to one side, the next is a double curtain, cleft at the middle, the two bits shrinking separately at the two sides, enabling entrance. The last-mentioned curtain is one that rolls upwards and downwards. The, first commentary gives some more details as regards these

three curtains. The single curtain shrinking to one side is said to be fixed on the left side, the double cleft-curtain on the right side, and the rolling one in the front. Thus the right side having the double curtain, has the gate of entrance for the danseuse. The second commentator says that the rolling curtain is for occasions of *Akasa Charins*, those appearing in the sky, such as the Devas. These pertain to drama and not to dance. This mystifying reference, however, shows us that there are other texts which describe a stage completely from the point of view of not only dance, which is performed by one person, but from the point of view of drama also, which has many persons personating in it, and consequently needs greater equipment about the stage.

The last thing mentioned of the stage by the poem is the beautification of the stage. Bharata says that the stage and the audience hall must be lavishly decorated with wood-carvings and paintings. The *Silappadikaram* also says that the stage must have a painted canopy above, that it must have the appearance of a newly built one, and that hangings of pearl and other garlands must beautify it.

The text then passes on to the dancing, *Purva Ranga*, etc., with which we have nothing to do at present. In the above account we have a few details about the stage, its length, breadth, height, its two gates, three curtains, lighting, and decoration. Only the stage proper, as much as is enough for dance, is described, and not the theatre completely. In connection with lighting, there is just a passing mention of a portion of the audience hall accommodating the king, but of the audience hall itself nothing is spoken. In the stage itself we do not hear of the green-room, etc. But there is a small word in the text '*Etra*,' which the second commentator takes to refer to the other features of the complete theatre which, though not described by the text of the poem, he gives from the texts on Natya. Thus this small description of the bare stage must not be taken to mean that the stage of those times itself was not well-built or was crude, but it means only that, for his poem, the author had no necessity to describe more.

Among poems none else gives even this information. However, the idea of a well-built stage being a fact, there are sundry references to certain parts of it in some other poems also. Thus the *Jivaka Chintamani* says that the curtains are three and are called single, double, and single rolling. The *Manimekhalai* says that the single curtain should be glass-like. There is reference to stage and dance on it in the *Manimekhalai*, but we have no details of the stage architecture given there. These references are given as footnotes by M. M. Swaminatha Aiyar in his edition of the *Silappadikaram*.

Coming to the Sastra, treatises on dance, drama, and music, we have little of the vast Natya literature of Tamil now available. Three of them are said to have been secured by the editor of the *Silappadikaram*, M. M. Swaminatha Aiyar. The *Silappadikaram* itself now and then refers to the rules laid down in the treatises. The first commentator quotes many extracts in his commentary, but none with either the name of the author or of the work. Only one quotation has been given by

him with the author's name and it is *Seyittriyamar*. The second commentator, a later writer who follows the first commentary, is ample in the information he gives. At the beginning of his commentary he gives a list of Natya and Sangita works upon which Ilankovadikal based his *Silappadikaram*, and another list on which he says he depends for his own commentary. The works thus mentioned as authorities for the *Silappadikaram* are *Peru Narai*, *Perunkuru*, *Pancha Bharatiyam* of Deva Rishi Narada, (3 works on Music) *Bharatam*, *Ahattiyam* (Agastya's work), *Muruval*, *Sayantam* (Jayantam, named after Indra's son Jayanta, for whom it was written), *Guna Nool*, and *Seyittriyam*, named after its author, (6 works on dance and drama). Those given by the commentator Adiyarkkunallar as the authorities he used are thus given by him: -

Isai Nunukkam of Sikhandi, pupil of Agastya. This work was written for the education in music of Sara Kumaram, born of the half-divine Pandya of the second Sangam called Anakula, and the Apsaras Tilottama whom the king met while riding in the air.

Indrakaliyam of Yamalendra.

Pancha Marabu of Arivananar.

Bharatha Senapatiyam of Adivayilar.

Madivananar Nataka Tamizh Nool of Pandyan Madivananar, a Pandyan king of the last Sangam who was a recognised poet. This work is said to be distinguished prominently by treating of *Puhazh Kootthu* (literally, eulogistic dance to glorify the victor-king: *Vettriyal*) from the earlier works which treated of *Vasaik Kootthu* (literally, satyric dance with reference to the defeated king: *Poduviyal*). None of these works are available now. However, we have fragments of these quoted by Adiyarkkunallar in his commentary, and when one peruses this portion of his commentary, one sees clearly that, to a large extent, the Tamil Natya Sastra is not only based on the Sanskrit Natya literature but also that the former borrows freely from the latter.

On the subject of theatre-architecture, some fragments of these works are available to us in the quotations of Adiyarkkunallar. The works quoted by him in this section on stage-architecture are *Bharata Senapatiyam*, *Seyttriyam* (an older work, being given, as noted above, as an authority for *Silappadikaram* itself) and the work of Madivananar, the Pandyan king. Besides extracts from these three, there are other valuable quotations which are anonymous.

The Natya Sastra of Bharata, in its treatment of the theatre begins with the choosing of the ground itself, giving the qualities of the ground that should be chosen as the plot for the building of the theatre. It says that the ground must be even and firm, and the soil sweet in smell and taste. The same things are mentioned in a long quotation from some unknown work, given by Adiyarkkunallar. It says that the soil of the ground should be sweet in scent and taste, and free from pebbles. The ground must not be moist or swampy. One of the characteristics of good soil is

that when a pit is dug, the mud dug out, on refilling the pit with it, must not remain as surplus. One must take care that he does not destroy for the sake of building a theatre such institutions of *Dharma*, like temples, monasteries, Brahmins' settlements and public wells. The most valuable part of this quotation is the locality it gives as the most proper place for the theatre. The theatre described by the *Silappadikaram* is a theatre in the Rajadhani or the Capital, and it is in the city and not in the palace. It is, however, patronised by the king. The use of the theatres is much spoilt by their locality. This quotation says that the theatre shall be built in the very centre of the city, facing one of the four main streets along which the car of the temple of that city runs:

"Urin Naduvinadahi,

Ter odun veediha edirmuhamahi."

Another writer is quoted here, and the qualities of good soil and the evils resulting from the choosing of bad soil are rather elaborately spoken of by Adiyarkkunallar. Another anonymous quotation gives the scale of measurement referred to at the beginning.

Another valuable quotation is from Seyittriyar, who is the only writer who gives slightly different dimensions for the stage. All the texts available give the same dimensions, and refer to the same details, two gates, three curtains, etc. Seyittriyar, while not changing the length, breadth and height of the stage-platform, gives the height of the stage-space between the floor of the stage and the beam, not as 4 *kols* but as 3 *kols*:

"Mukkol Tanum uyarvum uritte."

Another anonymous quotation here refers us to rules laid down by treatises in Sanskrit on the subject of the stage. Madivananar and Bharata Senapatiyar are quoted on the curtains, that they are three in number.

We have already mentioned that Adiyarkkunallar gives information about the other parts of the theatre. No quotations are given by him as regards these. He himself says that the other parts of the theatre not mentioned in the *Silappadikaram* must be taken as understood. Those he thus mentions are: -

Karandu Pokkidam.—Place to retire into, or place on the sides into which, after acting, the actor passes. This place perhaps served not only as verandahs to retire into, but also as green-room.

Kannular Kudijnaippalli.—Cloth tents housing the actors. These tents may suggest that the actors were travelling troupes, or that these tents were closely attached to the stage as substitutes for green-room.

Mannar Mandarodirukkum Avai Arangam.—The portion of the *sabha* or audience for the king and his party.

Ivattraiccoozhnda Puvi Nirai Mandar.—The audience portion for the citizen spectators. From this we see that the king sat with his attendants in the centre, and the other spectators, the chief citizens, sat round him in a semi-circle.

There is one more Tamil treatise on Natya to be dealt with. It is called the *Suddhanandaprakasam* and is with M. M. Swaminatha Aiyar. It seems to be later than all the works referred to above. On the dimensions of the stage, it not only follows but reproduces also the words of the *Silappadikaram*. Extracts from this work are given by the Editor as footnotes. From these extracts we see that this work draws most upon the Sanskrit treatises. On the subject of stage-building, two extracts from it are given by the Editor. These two extracts show the indebtedness of the work to the *Silappadikaram* and the Sanskrit Natya literature. Bharata says that the erection of the stage must be attended with auspicious ceremonies, feasting, music, and dance. The *Suddhanandaprakasam* also says that *Adal*, *Padal*, *Kottu* and *Pani* must mark the construction of the theatre. The extract further directs the stage builder to avoid places near temples, monasteries, birds' nests, ant-hills, and not to destroy these for building the theatre. Similarly it says that proximity to the quarters of elephants, the horse-stables, the battle-field and the hamlet of the low people must be avoided. In the second extract, the work says that besides the *Varna Bhutas* drawn on the floor of the stage for worship, there must be established on the stage the deity called *Nandin*. This is clearly due to Sanskrit influence, *Nandin* being one of the heads in the Sanskrit Natya pantheon. The extract further says that the theatre must be decorated with carvings of animals and birds.

There is a treatise in palm-leaf manuscript in the Adyar Mss. Library called *Sangita Sangraha Chintamani* by one Appalacharya of Srimushnam village, which is in South Arcot district. The work is in Sanskrit and Tamil; there are verses written in ungrammatical Sanskrit and upon them long comments are made in colloquial Tamil. The treatise is not very recent.

One of the chapters of this work treats of Natya, in connection with which the erection of a theatre is described. I have got a copy of this chapter made for me and the following account of the stage is given in it. Temples, monasteries, and Brahmin settlements should be avoided; and a good place for a theatre must be chosen within a park or *an island in the midst of a tank*. Such soil as is rocky or is full of ash, bones, and pebbles, must be avoided. The best soil is that in which, when a pit is dug and mud dug out is again put into the pit, we have some more mud left out; when there is no mud left out, the soil is not bad; but when the mud is insufficient to fill the pit, the soil is bad. The soil of bad taste should be avoided. The text gives the evil results of various bad tastes of soils.

The treatise gives two types of stages, one measuring 64X32 *Karas* or *Hastas* or *Muzhams* and the other 32x16. Thus, in Bharata's words, both the types are by shape *Vikrishta*; and by size the former is *Jyeshtha* than the latter which is smaller. Sixteen pillars are then mentioned, after the erection of which *Vastupuja* is to be done. The decoration of the house and the arrangement of the king's seat in the audience are then described. In this section the text quotes a Sanskrit treatise called *Nritta Ratnakaram*. From the above we see the similarities of details given in this work, which bases itself on the Sanskrit Natya literature, to those found in the Tamil texts above dealt with.

Thus this survey of the fragments of the Tamil Natya literature not only proves largely the subject on hand, *viz.*, the existence of well-built theatres in ancient India, but incidentally proves the fundamental unity that underlies Indian literature and art, the indebtedness of all vernaculars to Sanskrit, and the close way in which provincial literature and art are knit to Sanskrit, the Himalayan source of all the currents.